# ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA:

(70,247 MEN / 283 GUNS)

## GENERAL
## ROBERT E. LEE

oleon said that "the personality of neral is indispensable, he is the head, he all of the army." This was never han with Robert E. Lee and the Army thern Virginia. The character of Lee d the army from the time he took its and in June 1862, providing inspira- ad élan for the Rebel soldiers who ip its storied ranks.

had hardened and strengthened his s character through a lifetime of Biblical self-denial. He had lived his ictly by devotion to the self-sacrific- tues of duty and religion. There is certain impenetrability to Lee's per- y; he presents a profound enigma to raised after the advent of Freud, omed as we are to looking for dark in the hopes of finding the keys to 's character. Even in his own time, erate diarist Mary Chesnut mused journal, "Can anyone say that they Robert E. Lee?"

own father's misspent life provided h a disturbing cautionary tale about sequences of the lack of self-control. E. Lee was the son of "Light Horse Lee, a Revolutionary War hero reputation had become blackened by nancial schemes. By 1807, when was born, the family mansion was a cheerless, barren place with placed across the doors to keep out s. Before Robert was two, his father ved two stretches in debtor's prison. , Light-Horse Harry, who had been njured in a Baltimore political riot, a boat for a retreat in Barbados, family never saw him again.

age of twelve Robert, the youngest children, was the only one still at hen his mother's health worsened, youngster shouldered the burdens of managing the household and ministering to his ill parent. As he approached late adolescence, Lee found his options limited by his family's poverty. Although he loved the soil and would have found fulfillment in a planter's life, there was no earth for him to till—his father had lost all of the family land. There were signs that he was interested in a career in medicine, but the family could not afford the cost of the necessary education. Since Robert had long been interested in the military, he accepted an appointment to Military Academy at West Point, to prepare for the only profession for which his family could afford to train him.

Lee performed brilliantly as a student, graduating with high honors, 2nd among the 46 cadets in the class of 1829, with a sterling record of conduct. West Point regulated cadets' behavior with a demerit system. Demerits, called "crimes," were given for tardiness or absence at roll calls, meals, chapel, drill, and inspections. They were issued for dirty quarters or equipment, visiting after taps, disturbances during study hours, any of a number of lapses in personal grooming, smoking in the barracks,

improper behavior toward cadet officers and academy officers, and altercations or fights. The system was so comprehensive and administered so rigidly that only one cadet in the history of the Academy ever passed the four-year course of instruction without committing a "crime." That cadet was Robert E. Lee.

The top graduates were given their choice of assignments, and Lee chose to go into the engineers, the elite branch of the army. He was a stunning, handsome young officer, vibrant and gregarious, a man who enjoyed flirting with young, pretty ladies. This carefree post-graduate period was no more than a brief interlude, however, ended by Lee's ready adherence to a tradition of five generations of Lee men—that of bettering their status by marrying well.

In 1831, just two years out of West Point, he married his childhood playmate and distant cousin Mary Custis, the only daughter of George Washington's adopted son, George Washington Parke Custis. Robert and Mary were wed in the Custis family mansion at Arlington overlooking the Potomac River. The house had become a shrine to the memory of George Washington, full of articles used by the venerated Father of the Country. In addition to bettering Lee's status, he realized the marriage had made him an heir to the Washington tradition. Washington had always been Lee's hero. Now, as he ate on Washington's china and took up Washington's knife and fork, Lee also took up Washington's view of duty, and acted as he thought Washington would. His self-conscious effort to emulate Washingtonian tact and grave self-discipline caused Virginia governor Henry Wise to remark, "General Lee, you certainly play Washington to perfection."

Lee's wife's health started to deteriorate in 1831, beginning thirty years of nearly constant illness that would in the end reduce her to a total invalid. During the decades before the Civil War, Lee moved from military assignment to assignment, separated from his wife and children (who would eventually number four daughters and three sons). Here again the Washingtonian virtues prevailed, for Lee tried to accept the demanding personal burdens of his duty without complaint. The long separations from his family were hard on the young officer, however, and by the 1850s had produced in him a state of melancholy. Lee's letters in this period were often tinged with discouragement at his condition and the painfully slow promotion rate among the engineers in the Regular Army. By 1855, he had risen only to lieutenant colonel in the 2nd Cavalry. A theme of personal suffering as God's retribution for his sins became present in his letters. When he left home for Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis in 1855, he viewed the separation as "a just punishment for my sins," and prayed that "I may truly repent of the many errors of my life, that my sins may be forgiven." By 1857, he was considering leaving the army, as he indicated in this letter to future Confederate general Albert Sidney Johnston:

> *I can see that I have at least to decide the question, which I have staved off for 20 years, whether I am to continue in the Army all my life, or to leave it now. My preferences which have clung to me from boyhood impel me to adopt the former course, but yet I feel that a man's family has its claims too.*

When the Civil War came in 1861, the private wilderness of self-doubt that had plagued Lee for a decade disappeared. Lee had always been held in high esteem by his fellow military men, both for his abilities and character. He had no greater admirer than the highest-ranking officer in the United States, Mexican War hero General Winfield Scott. He had won Scott's undying respect for his brilliant service as a staff officer during the Mexican War campaign from Vera Cruz to Mexico City. Lee had been praised in Scott's battle reports more than any other officer, and in the banquet after the final victory, the victorious Scott had risen, rapped on the table, and proposed a toast to "the health of Captain Robert E. Lee, without whose aid we should not now be here."

When Sumter fell, President Abraham Lincoln and Scott tried to make Lee the principal Union field commander. When

Virginia seceded, however, Lee's visceral allegiance to the soil of his native state would not allow him to take up arms against it, and he declined the offer when it was tendered on April 18, 1861. On April 23, he accepted the command of Virginia's army and navy, and worked tirelessly for the next three months organizing the Old Dominion's fledgling military forces.

In late July 1861 he was given his first field command, in western Virginia. His first campaign in September-October 1861 was a disaster, and Lee's popularity plunged. His seemingly tentative behavior in this rugged mountainous region earned him the disparaging nickname "Granny Lee." When Jefferson Davis reassigned Lee to the department of the Carolinas and Georgia in November 1861, the locals protested the appointment. Davis wrote later of "the clamor which then arose followed him when he went to South Carolina, so that it became necessary on his departure to write a letter to Governor of that State, telling him what manner of man he was."

Lee became President Davis' military advisor in March 1862, though his appointment to this post went virtually unnoticed in Southern newspapers. His tenure in Richmond did garner him another contemptuous moniker, the "King of Spades," for his insistence on having earthworks constructed around the Southern capital. When Lee took command of the Confederate army on June 1, after its previous commander Gen. Joseph E. Johnston had been wounded at Seven Pines, the *Richmond Examiner* announced: "Evacuating Lee, who has never yet risked a single battle with the invader, is commanding general."

This moment, however, marked the emergence of one of history's most successful commanders. Lee named his divisions the "Army of Northern Virginia" and proceeded to attack Maj. Gen. George McClellan's larger and better-equipped force in the Seven Days' Battles. His offensives, while bloody and clumsy—Lee's plans were complex and far too difficult for inexperienced officers to perform—drove McClellan back from the shadows of Richmond to the cover of his gunboats on the James River. Satisfied McClellan had been turned aside, Lee moved to deal with Maj. Gen. John Pope's Army of Virginia, which was coalescing outside Washington. During the Second Manassas Campaign, Lee audaciously divided his army in the face of the enemy, sending Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson on a long flank march into the enemy rear. Pope was bewildered by his opponent's move to the point that the Confederates were able to unite forces in the middle of a battle and rout Pope's army at Second Manassas. Winfield Scott's former staff officer had taken over command of an outnumbered army with its back to Richmond, and then defeated two larger Union armies in two months. With the enemy thrown back to Washington, D.C., the epithet "Granny Lee" disappeared from the headlines.

Lee was loath to withdraw after such an exhilarating triumph as Second Manassas. In Thomas Jackson and James Longstreet Lee had found two able corps (or wing) commanders, his men were tired but victorious veterans, and the spirit of the army was high. Lee wanted to maintain an offensive to take the war onto the Union-occupied soil of Maryland, where he hoped to catalyze the enlistment of Marylanders into the Confederate ranks. With his opponent disorganized, perhaps a victory there would bring assistance from overseas. And so Lee crossed the Potomac in September 1862.

The move was a desperate one and his army, though victorious, was ill-shod and poorly-equipped, and thus not fit for the enterprise. Under the guidance of General McClellan, the Union army recovered from Pope's debacle sooner than expected and marched to meet Lee. Fighting a battle that would have been better avoided at Sharpsburg, Lee was fortunate to be able to retreat across the Potomac at the end of the Maryland Campaign, although his casualties had heavily bled the army. At the year's end, he recovered his earlier good fortune and dealt the Union war effort another blow at the Battle of Fredericksburg, where the Army of the Potomac's new commander, Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside, obliged

Lee by hurling division after division against his impregnable defensive positions.

The opening of the 1863 campaign season opened with Lee's most perfectly-orchestrated victory at the Battle of Chancellorsville in early May. Outnumbered two-to-one and initially outmaneuvered by the Army of the Potomac's latest chief, Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker, Lee took bigger risks than ever before, dividing his army in the face of a superior enemy, and then dividing it again. A flanking force under Stonewall Jackson crushed the Union right flank, setting in motion a series of Union reverses that took the fight out of Hooker and sent the sullen enemy host back across the Rappahannock River. To capitalize on his momentum, Lee once again decided to march north, this time aiming at Pennsylvania. This invasion (or, more properly, "raid," since the incursion was never intended to permanently hold enemy territory), promised to bring about a climactic engagement. On June 3, his men quietly slipped out of their works at Fredericksburg and began marching toward the Shenandoah Valley, triggering the beginning of the Gettysburg Campaign.

What made Lee such a great commander? Some have argued that Lee's abilities were rooted in the "cavalier tradition" of Virginia. This tradition was an aristocratic holdover from England that held that the "best men" of society were born to lead, victory being guaranteed by the wholehearted backing of those born to follow. While historians have begun to question the impact such a arcane holdover had in developing differences between the North and the South, it does seem that Lee took very seriously that he, as a gentleman, was entitled to possess and judiciously apply authority. He was able to maintain a subtle balance between his ability to dominate and inspire by his mere presence, while not becoming intoxicated by such power.

The second component—Lee's essential humility—was evident in the manner in which he waged his battles. He rarely made himself conspicuous, preferring to lead by his moral strength while trusting the execution of his orders to other professional soldiers with a formal military education (for him, warfare was too important to entrust to amateurs). His command style derived from his twin guiding principles of duty and religion. He confided to a Prussian visitor the essential features of his leadership: "I plan and work with all my might to bring the troops to the right place at the right time," he said. "With that I have done my duty. As soon as I order the troops forward into battle, I lay the fate of my army in the hands of God." There were obvious practical defects in this philosophy, and sometimes his subordinates were paralyzed by the discretion Lee afforded them. Yet, Lee's command technique repeatedly succeeded in his first year with the Army of Northern Virginia because he had surrounded himself with lieutenants who were not afraid to act on their own initiative and who understood his desires.

Another facet of Lee's cavalier credo went a long way toward explaining the success of his army—his ability to work well with a wide assortment of high-strung prima donnas in subordinate positions. Lee believed that a gentleman "does not needlessly and unnecessarily remind an offender of a wrong," and not only forgives "but can forget." Lee was constitutionally non-confrontational; he avoided humiliating his subordinates, even when he believed they had failed him. Instead he would reassign or relieve ineffectual commanders, such as he had with Maj. Gens. John B. Magruder, Benjamin Huger, and Theophilus Holmes after the Seven Days' Battles.

Perhaps the biggest conundrum of Lee's personality was how his legendary calm could exist side-by-side with the audacity that became the most striking feature of his generalship. President Davis' aide, Col. Joseph Ives, made a fascinating prediction in a conversation with Col. E. Porter Alexander just after Lee took over the Virginia army. At a time when the newspapers were calling the general "Granny Lee," Ives informed Alexander: "[Lee] will take more desperate chances and take them quicker than any other general in this country, North or South. . .His name might be Audacity." Maj. Gen. Henry Heth later sec-

onded this opinion, writing of Lee at Gettysburg, "This determination to strike his enemy was not from the position he found himself [in], but from a leading characteristic of the man. General Lee, not excepting Jackson, was the most aggressive man in his army." Lee had been unfailingly aggressive ever since the Seven Days. While this behavior cowed his early adversaries and made his army legendary, it also bled the Confederacy of its manpower. Lee's thrilling assaults were winning astounding victories in the short run, but over the course of the war they would eventually rob him of his offensive power and condemn him to a defensive conflict he could not win.

But what Southerner would not have sacrificed himself for a commander such as Lee? The general was at the height of his power during the Gettysburg Campaign, and many of those who encountered him during this period remarked on the magnificence of his appearance. British observer Arthur J. L. Fremantle judged him "the handsomest man of his age I ever saw . . . tall, broad shouldered, very well made, well set up, a thorough soldier in appearance." Lt. Col. G. Moxley Sorrel, Longstreet's staff officer, commented on "the perfect poise of head and shoulders," and wrote "his white teeth and winning smile were irresistible" (features that are not visible in any photograph). Age had given additional gravity to what had always been a dignified bearing. In his fifty-seventh year, his hair had turned gray, and he sported a full gray beard. Five feet ten inches tall and 165 pounds, he was short in the legs, so when he rode a horse he seemed much taller. In this campaign he wore a worn long gray jacket and a black felt hat. His blue trousers were tucked into high leather boots that came up to cover his knees. His only insignia of rank were three stars on his collar. As always, he did not carry any weapons. Notwithstanding his weathered coat, Fremantle called his appearance "smart and clean."

There were issues, however, that were cause for concern. Lee was campaigning without Jackson for the first time, for the corps commander had been mortally wounded at Chancellorsville. Jackson's loss resulted in an army-wide reorganization from two corps to three. The reconstituted army now possessed two new lieutenant generals and Lee was operating for the first time with three primary subordinates. He was not in good health, being weakened by pleurisy and an infection he had contracted in April; he may also have been suffering from a heart condition.

As he crossed the Mason-Dixon Line, the ramifications of the campaign began to weigh on Lee, creating an unusual tension in him. A number of observers noted that Lee was uneasy, anxious, uncharacteristically excitable. He fretted about the disappearance of Maj. Gen. "Jeb" Stuart, whose absence meant that Lee was receiving little in the way of accurate intelligence, even as he moved deep into enemy territory. It augured poorly that for the first time anyone could remember, Lee's many concerns, in Lt. Gen. James Longstreet's words, "threatened his superb equipoise."

GETTYSBURG: Lee woke on the morning of July 1 at his headquarters on the outskirts of Chambersburg, about 25 miles west of Gettysburg. He expected that a battle was imminent somewhere along the Chambersburg-Gettysburg Pike, and he conferred with Lt. Gen. A. P. Hill, the new commander of the Third Corps. Hill's men were headed eastward that morning, and Lee stressed his desire that he not trigger a general engagement before the army could concentrate. Lee had given orders for the army to group at Cashtown on the Chambersburg Pike eight miles west of Gettysburg, but it would take most of the day for Lt. Gen. Richard Ewell's Second Corps to arrive from the north and for the rest of the army to snake along the single road over South Mountain from Chambersburg. He determined to move his headquarters forward to Cashtown that morning.

As he rode toward Cashtown with First Corps commander James Longstreet, he heard the rumble of cannon from the east. Arriving in Cashtown about 11:00 a.m. he knew from the rolling thunder that a substantial fight was underway. Lee had only

recently learned that the Army of the Potomac had marched north after him, and that Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade had replaced Joe Hooker. Knowing that Meade outnumbered him, he became acutely anxious that Stuart's cavalry, his "eyes and ears," return soon from a wide-ranging raid into the enemy rear. After listening intently to the sound of the guns, Lee felt he had no choice but to ride ahead to see for himself what was happening.

Sometime after 1:00 p.m. he reached a ridge one mile east of Herr Ridge just west of Gettysburg. What he learned must have disturbed him. Hill's leading division under Maj. Gen. Henry Heth had been mauled badly on the outskirts of town by elements of the Army of the Potomac. Although Heth had withdrawn, far off to the left he could see Confederates (Maj. Gen. Robert Rodes' Division, Richard Ewell's Second Corps) on Oak Hill attacking the Federals in front of Heth from the north. Heth rode up begging for orders to attack in concert with Rodes, but Lee at first would not permit it, still reluctant to commit his army to battle with so little information about the enemy in front of him. About 2:30 p.m., however, Lee realized a magnificent opportunity was at hand to crush the Union First Corps, and gave Heth the order to attack. Maj. Gen. Dorsey Pender's Division, Hill's Corps, was behind Heth in support.

The overwhelming combination swept the First Corps off the ridges west of town. Another stroke of good luck for Lee was the appearance of Maj. Gen. Jubal Early's Division of Ewell's Corps, which arrived from the northeast during the heavy afternoon fighting. Taking position on Rodes' left, Early's brigades outflanked and routed the enemy Eleventh Corps. In the late afternoon, masses of enemy soldiers from both corps were running back through Gettysburg to rally on Cemetery Hill, a prominent eminence just south of town. Lee's men were pursuing and rounding up thousands of prisoners as the commanding general rode forward to Seminary Ridge to observe the spectacle. He had just witnessed a substantial Confederate victory, but the Federal forces had not been thoroughly crushed and there were still several hours of daylight remaining. Lee was unsure of what to do next.

Longstreet's corps was not up, and Lee was uncertain as to the enemy's strength. He halted Maj. Gen. Richard H. Anderson's arriving division (Third Corps) two miles west of town as a reserve. Yet, Cemetery Hill was clearly the key to the battlefield, and had to be taken if possible. According to Lee's report of the battle, he sent Second Corps chief General Ewell instructions "to carry the hill occupied by the enemy, if he found it practicable, but to avoid a general engagement until the arrival of the other divisions of the army, which were ordered to hasten forward." What, exactly, did this confusing order mean? Ewell was unsure. Although he had several fresh brigades coming up, the enemy had deployed a number of guns on the eminence and were rapidly fortifying it. Ewell, who had previously operated exclusively within Stonewall Jackson's rigid command system, was now faced with a discretionary order. He felt constrained by Lee's directive not to bring on a full-fledged battle, was lacking fresh troops in large numbers, and night was rapidly approaching. After some consideration, Ewell decided an attack that evening was not justified. Lee's overly discretionary and complicated order to Ewell was partially to blame for the malaise that struck down the Confederate drive.

That evening, Longstreet joined Lee and urged him to move the army to the right, around the Union left, taking up a strong position between the Federal army and Washington. This, claimed Longstreet with some justification, would force the Federals to attack them. By that time, however, Lee considered a battle at Gettysburg unavoidable. "No," he said, "the enemy is there, and I am going to attack him there." His army, though, was awkwardly positioned on exterior lines and communications between both ends were difficult and time-consuming. The Federal position, by contrast, was rather compact and anchored on both flanks by hills and wooded terrain. Sometime before sunset, Lee rode from Seminary Ridge over to Ewell's headquar-

ters near Gettysburg to make plans for the next day. Ewell and his subordinates were reluctant either to attack from their present location or to withdraw and come to the right to shorten the army's lines. Their solution was that Longstreet should come up and attack on the right. As Lee headed back to his tent for the night, he had still not finalized his plans for the next day.

The general spent the morning of July 2 near his headquarters tent, which was pitched on the west slope of Seminary Ridge just south of the Chambersburg Pike. There, a meeting was underway with a variety of officers, including Longstreet, Hill, and Maj. Gens. Lafayette McLaws and John, Hood. Jeb Stuart and his cavalry had not yet reported, so Lee still knew little more about the strength or position of the Army of the Potomac than what he could see from the Seminary, but he felt he had to maintain the initiative by attacking. Shortly after sunrise, Lee sent a scouting party to Little Round Top to examine the enemy left. They returned three hours later and reported that they had seen no sign of the enemy there in force. (Given that thousands of Federals were active in the area that morning, the report is one of the most puzzling mysteries of the battle).

After receiving this news, Lee decided to attack from his right with Longstreet's two available First Corps divisions (McLaws and Hood; George Pickett was still marching to join the army). Within a short time, Lee gave McLaws orders to move south without being seen and place his brigades across the Emmitsburg Road. He was to attack en echelon toward Gettysburg, driving in the Federal left flank with Hood's Division in support—a move similar to Jackson's flanking attack at Chancellorsville. Longstreet was visibly upset by Lee's plan to attack the enemy and disputed Lee's tactical arrangements with McLaws' Division, to no avail.

About 9:00 a.m. Lee rode again to Ewell's headquarters. The Second Corps commander persuaded Lee to let his men stay in place so they could attack and create a diversion whenever they heard the sound of Longstreet's guns. This diversion, Ewell further argued, could be converted to an all-out attack on the enemy on Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill if a good opportunity presented itself. Lee acquiesced and rode back to Seminary Ridge, where Longstreet was finalizing his arrangements to move his divisions toward their jump-off positions near the Peach Orchard. Richard Anderson's Division of Hill's Corps was filing south on Seminary Ridge. Anderson's men, who would be on Longstreet's immediate left flank, would continue the attack when "Old Pete" swept the enemy in front of their position. By about 11:00 a.m., Lee had marked out the responsibilities for the day's attack, with every division on hand (except Pender's and Heth's, which had been badly cut up on the first day of battle) slated to participate in some capacity. Much like the Seven Days' Battles, however, Lee's directive required close coordination between two widely-separated flanks.

For a variety of reasons, Longstreet did not get into position until about 4:00 p.m., when his two divisions reached the area fronting the Peach Orchard opposite the Union left flank. Longstreet and his commanders were shocked to find Federals posted there in strength and strongly supported by artillery. Lee had ridden south to be with Longstreet in mid-afternoon, and the plan to attack up the Emmitsburg Road was quickly changed: Hood would now form on McLaws' right flank and begin the attack north up the Emmitsburg Road. McLaws would attack next, and Anderson's men would follow.

Once his corps were in position Lee typically did not interfere with his subordinates. Instead, he went back to the Lutheran Seminary to watch the progress of the engagement. One man said his face betrayed no anxiety, while another reported that he received and sent only one message (which if true demonstrates a remarkably detached command style). Longstreet's men dutifully opened the attack and crushed the Federal Third Corps, driving it and reinforcements from other Federal corps back some distance onto southern Cemetery Ridge. Despite some of the hardest fighting of the war, the Union line

remained intact. Meanwhile, Ewell's men on the opposite end of the line attacked hours after Longstreet's engagement began and, because of a Federal blunder that left Culp's Hill all but unoccupied, made a lodgment on that wooded and rocky eminence. Lee's army had suffered horrendous casualties and was stretched thinner than ever, yet he was still optimistic that another offensive the following morning would bear fruit. Strengthened by the arrival of Maj. Gen. George Pickett's Division, he intended to reinforce Longstreet and renew the assault on the Union left at dawn; Ewell would support the assault as he had on the previous day.

Three things immediately went wrong with this plan. First, when dawn arrived Pickett's brigades were still far to the rear—possibly because Lee was so exhausted he forgot to give proper orders to Pickett. (Another possibility exists that Lee gave the orders to Longstreet, who then failed to transmit them.) Next, Ewell was himself attacked on Culp's Hill by the entire Union Twelfth Corps at daybreak. Last, when Lee rode to Longstreet's headquarters that morning, he found Longstreet preoccupied with his own plans for an attack around the enemy left, a fixation that had preoccupied "Old Pete" since the beginning of the battle.

With an early and coordinated attack no longer possible, Lee rode back toward his headquarters and called a conference of his generals to discuss a new plan. Still determined to assault the enemy, Lee shifted his attention north to a section of Cemetery Ridge on the right center of the Union line opposite Hill's front. The area had been penetrated by a single Confederate brigade at dusk on July 2, and perhaps the brief lodgment had influenced Lee's thinking. It was a desperate plan, for the approach was open for almost one mile, dozens of pieces of enemy artillery could be brought to bear on his men, and that section of Meade's line was readily reinforceable. Pickett's Division would spearhead the attack on the right, joined on its left by Henry Heth's Division (now led by Brig. Gen. Johnston Pettigrew), and half of Pender's Division (soon to be led by Maj. Gen. Isaac Trimble). Two brigades of Anderson's Division would provide support on Pickett's right. Lee's selection of troops composing the left half of his force is astonishing. Heth's and Pender's brigades had been devastated on July 1 and were hardly suitable to make such an attack. It is unlikely Lee realized the full extent of their disorder and losses, although it was his responsibility to know such things. The attacking divisions would converge on an umbrella-shaped clump of trees on the crest of Cemetery Ridge. The assault would be opened by a cannonade from 150 massed guns, the heaviest so far in the war. The barrage was intended to pulverize and silence the Federal artillery and drive away or demoralize the Union defenders.

Longstreet did not like the plan and said so. Lee insisted it be made and commanded by Longstreet himself—even though the majority of the attacking column were men from A. P. Hill's Third Corps, and the attack would be delivered on Hill's front. During the lengthy preparations of that morning, Lee rode up and down the lines, consulting with Longstreet and others and inspecting positions and troops. It was not until this time that he realized how badly shot up were Hill's divisions; scores of men stood in line with blood-soaked bandages from wounds suffered on July 1. "Many of these poor boys should go to the rear; they are not able for duty," Lee said to Isaac Trimble, whom he had only minutes earlier selected to head Pender's pair of brigades in the attack. Lee could have stopped the attack entirely or substituted others in their place, but chose not to do so. Many observers mentioned a nervousness in his manner that morning, but there were no indications that he ever faltered in his decision to strike Cemetery Ridge.

Once the men and guns were in position, Lee committed the battle to Longstreet and sat quietly nearby. The guns, under the overall direction of E. P. Alexander, opened fire about 1:00 p.m. At one point during the cannonade, Lee rode out in front of Pickett's men, who shouted and pleaded with him to leave for a place of safety; he

waved his hat and rode on. The infantry moved forward about 3:00 p.m. and, as Longstreet had predicted beforehand, were torn to pieces. Only small clumps of men managed to actually enter the Union lines; thousands more were left crumpled on the wide open fields between the ridges. As mangled brigades drifted back to Seminary Ridge, Lee again rode forward trying to assuage his bloodied soldiers by telling them, "The fault is mine. . .It will be all right in the end," and "Go back and rest yourself." Fremantle called his conduct at this terrible moment "perfectly sublime." Although Lee, Longstreet, and others prepared Seminary Ridge for a counterattack by the victorious Union defenders, the counterstroke was never delivered. The battle of Gettysburg was over. As Lee later explained to Longstreet, "It is all my fault. I thought my men were invincible."

Next to Malvern Hill, the second and third days at Gettysburg represented the nadir of Lee's generalship. By the summer of 1863, however, Lee more than any other embodied the Southern cause, and blame for the defeat was deflected from his shoulders. Although he offered to resign, President Davis asked him—Who else was capable of taking his place? The casualties he had sustained at Gettysburg so crippled his army, however, that he could not again mount a sustained offensive campaign into enemy territory.

Although his days of wide-ranging strategic offensives were over, some of Lee's best generalship was still ahead. His battles against Meade and U. S. Grant from the Wilderness through Cold Harbor in the spring of 1864 are exhibitions of defensive genius, and his nine-month defense of Petersburg and Richmond while the rest of the Confederacy crumbled around him was magnificent. When his lines were finally broken on April 2, 1865, Lee evacuated the Southern capital and fled west, where he was trapped and surrendered at Appomattox Court House in April.

As president of Washington College in Lexington, Lee spent the five remaining years of his life educating Virginia's young men. He died in October 1870, and was buried there.

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